

Did You Love My Mother?

By Al Smith

The Church teaches us that when Our Blessed Lord spoke these words from the Cross: “Woman behold your son, Son behold your Mother” (Jn. 19:26), that we were given at that moment, the title, ‘Children of Mary.’To help explain this spiritual adoption in a deeper way, let’s consider a few words by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. In the book *The Cries of Jesus from the Cross*, Sheen writes:

From the Cross, He completed His last will and testament. He had already committed His blood to the Church, His garments to His enemies, a thief to Paradise, and would soon commend His body to the grave and His soul to His Heavenly Father. To whom, then, could He give the two treasures which He loved above all others, Mary and John? He would bequeath them to one another, giving at once a son to His Mother and a Mother to His friend.

Mary is not only the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour, she is also our Mother. This is not by a title of courtesy, not by a mere figure of speech, but by the right of bringing us forth in sorrow at the foot of the Cross. It was by weakness and disobedience at the foot of the tree of Good and Evil that Eve lost the title, Mother of the Living; it is at the foot of the tree of the Cross that Mary, by sacrifice and obedience, regained for us the title, Mother of the Living.

But what does this adoption mean? Should I embrace this holy Mother and include her in my life, or should I ignore her and leave her uninvited into my home and my family? Life passes by very quickly, and there will come a time when we will have to make an accounting before Our Lord. What if I told you that the one question Jesus may ask is, “Did you love my Mother?”

Pondering this made me restless. I’ve been guilty of saying Mary was my Mother but not letting Mary be my Mother. *Did not Christ desire to share with me His Kingdom and all its treasures? Why would I choose to ignore the one person that God chose to be His Mother and mine? Why would I choose to reject the love, guidance, graces, and blessing that the Blessed Mother wanted to give me, as she certainly gave Our Lord during His life?* After searching my heart and taking stock of my actions (or the lack of) towards the Blessed Mother, I truly started to experience a sense of sorrow. I knew that I needed to apologize to both Our Lord and Our Lady. Sadly, this apology would take a while to materialize. It only came after an ‘epiphany.’

We all know stories of drunk drivers who get behind the wheel of a car and kill innocent people. How would I respond if a drunk driver asked me for mercy after killing my child? While I was pondering this, I saw out of the corner of my eye, a crucifix hanging on the wall in my living room. In that moment, I saw that I was the drunk driver, intoxicated with the sins of the flesh and the love of the world. It was my sins that nailed Jesus to His Cross. I was the reckless one that needed to apologize to the Victim’s Mother for the role that I played in the death of her Son. That victim was Jesus and the Mother was the Blessed Virgin Mary. Archbishop Sheen writes:

If you can stand the gaze of a Crucifix long enough, you will discover these truths. First, if sin cost Him Who is Innocence, so much, then I who am guilty cannot take it lightly; second, in all the world, there is only one thing worse than sin, and that is to forget I am a sinner; third, more bitter than the Crucifixion must be my rejection of that Love by which I was redeemed.

What had she done to deserve the Seven Swords? What crimes had she committed to rob her of her Son? She had done nothing, but we have. We have sinned against her Divine Son, we have sentenced him to the Cross, and in sinning against him, we wounded her.

If we had been less proud, his crown of thorns would have been less piercing; if we had been less avaricious, the nails in the hands would have been less burning; if we had traveled less in the devious ways of sin, his feet would not have been so deeply dug with steel; if our speech had been less biting, his lips would have been less parched; if we had been less sinful, his agony would have been shorter; if we had loved more, he would have been hated less.

With these thoughts from Archbishop Sheen, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your relationship with the Blessed Mother and see if an apology might be in order. Imagine yourself approaching her at the foot of the Cross. Look up to our Crucified Lord and take a few moments to reflect. Then, may I encourage you to reach out and apologize to the Blessed Mother for the role you played in the death of her Son and your Saviour Jesus Christ.

I recall a song written in 2001 by Fr. Eugene O’Reilly, CSsR. The song was entitled ‘Father I Have Sinned’ (The Prodigal Son). The lyrics are beautiful and provide a great consolation to many ‘prodigals’ like myself. Having made my confession and asking for pardon, I envisioned the Blessed Mother singing the words of the chorus in that beautiful song: *I forgive you. I love you. You are mine. Take my hand. Go in peace, sin no more, beloved one.*

I knew at once, when I made my apology to the Blessed Mother, my life changed; my relationship with her was strengthened. I rejoice in thinking how great her joy would be, to shelter under her mantle, one more of her Son’s lost sheep.

May I recommend that if you have never before prayed to Mary, do so now. Can you not see that if Christ himself willed to be physically formed in her for nine months and then be spiritually formed by her for thirty years. It is to her that we must go to learn how to have Christ formed in us.



Crucifixion by Bernardo Daddi, 1340-1345

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MASSES & SERVICES
Saturday Anticipated Mass: 5pm
Sunday Masses: 9am, 11am, 5pm

Mon – Wed Masses: 8am
Thurs Mass & OLPH Novena: 8am & 12pm Noon
1st Thurs: 12pm Mass/Novena/ Healing Prayers
Fri, Sat & Holidays: 9am Mass
Fri in July & August: 8am Mass

Children’s Mass: 9am 1st Sunday of the month Oct-June
Children’s Liturgy: 11am
 All Sundays except the 1st Sunday from Sept- June

Reconciliation
 Saturday 4pm - 4:45pm
Adoration
 Saturday 9:30-10am

OFFICE HOURS
 Monday-Friday 9am-4pm

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 Babu Mathew, CSsR
Associate Pastor
 Joseph Horo, CSsR

Office Manager
 Virginia Fong
Pastoral Coordinator
 Bertilla Watanabe
Bookkeeper
 Corinna Siy
Youth Ministry Coordinator
 Theresa Barao
OLPH School Principal
 Lora Clarke
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OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH

March 1, 2020

1st Sunday of Lent

Meditate on the True Meaning of Love

Dear Parishioners,

As we begin the season of Lent, I hope you’re already thinking of how to take this opportunity to deepen your spiritual preparation for Easter. The three ways recommended by the Church are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Let me say a few words about prayer today.

The founder of the Redemptorists, St Alphonsus was a great advocate of prayer. He personally felt his treatise *Prayer: The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection* which he wrote in 1759, was the most useful of all his writings. In it he says prayer is “the necessary and sure means of obtaining salvation, and all the graces we need to attain it.”

Much of St Alphonsus’ writings, which included many volumes of moral theology, were designed to help people grow in the love of God. He was opposed to a harsh approach in moral matters and was genuinely less concerned with judging people and more interested in helping them discover how they can simply get closer to Jesus.

As God’s mercy and compassion were constant themes in his writings, he felt the deep desire to respond to this love through the examination of his own thoughts, feelings and motivations. The result of his prayer and pious rumination is his written meditation of the Way of the Cross. It is probably the most widely published traditional version of the Stations used by the Church. This beautiful, little gem of work provides us with a great opportunity to meditate on the true meaning of love – Jesus’ love for the will of his Father and his love for the people whom he was called to redeem.

This Way of the Cross will be prayed every Friday of Lent at 7pm including Good Friday. I hope we can all join together to share this wonderful prayer. I invite you to join us for the Follow Me video series in the Hall after that.

Let us ask our Blessed Mother for help in arriving at a deeper appreciation of our Lord’s love for us this Lent.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Babu Mathew, CSsR

Catechumens and candidates in RCIA, as well as their sponsors, will be attending the Rite of Election this weekend at Holy Rosary Cathedral. Let us pray for them as they draw closer towards a deeper love and understanding of our Lord and full communion into the Church this Easter.



Have mercy, O Lord, for we have sinned. Have mercy, O Lord, for we have sinned. - Psalm 51

NEWS & NOTICES

Weekly Collection: Sunday Mass Offering Feb 22 & 23: \$4,776.60. Offering for the Needy: \$170. Catholic Press: \$40. Initial Offering: \$25. St. Joseph’s Society: \$5. Thank you for your faith-filled generosity.

Stations of the Cross: Join us for the Stations of the Cross to meditate on the suffering of the Lord every Friday of Lent at 7pm followed by Lenten Series Video & discussion.

Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteers are needed for our 1st Thursday Soup service after the noon Mass this week. Help is needed to make soup for 15 people and serve it at noon on Thursday March 6. Help is also needed for coffee service after the 9am Mass on Sunday. Please email: olphchurchvolunteers@gmail.com if you are available to help.

2020 Envelope Box Pickup: Your 2020 Sunday envelopes will no longer be in the Church foyer for pickup. Envelope boxes will be kept in the parish office and can be picked up Monday- Friday during office hours.

Madonna Group: The Madonna Group is for our young at heart seniors to get together for lunch and sharing. Our activities include speakers on educational and spiritual topics, sometimes a video or sing-a-long. No membership required, just \$2 at the door. Next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 4, at Noon in the Church hall. A video on The Eucharistic Miracle of Buenos Aires will be shown. Please contact Monica Cheung at 778-889-8837 if you wish to attend.

Badminton: Join fellow parishioners for a fun afternoon of badminton every Saturday 1-3pm in the school gym. Rackets will be provided if you don’t have your own.

Blossom Ball OLPH School Gala: March 7 Westin Bayshore Vancouver. Cocktails & Auction at 6pm. Dinner & Live Auction at 7pm. Dancing to follow. For all information and donation opportunities, please visit www.olphgala.com.

Raising Children in a Digital World: The digital world is here to stay, changing our society in ways that has far-reaching consequences for our children. How do we harness the spectacular connecting potential and yet avoid the pitfalls of attachment to technology gone away? How do we prepare them to live in this new world and yet preserve what is required for health development to take place? Join clinical counsellor and developmentalist Dr. Deborah MacNamara on Wednesday, March 4 at St. Anthony Parish in West Vancouver from 6 p.m. until 7:15 p.m. No charge and no registration required.

40 Days for Life: Help save lives by praying for an end to abortion and euthanasia in your community on Feb. 26 - Apr. 5. Join us on Willow Street at W 32nd Avenue in Vancouver from 7am until 7pm. You can sign up for the vigil hours you would like to help with. Learn more at www.40daysforlife.com.

"My God! My God!" Lenten Retreat: Explore times when we cry out to God and take time to listen for God’s response. A prayerful invitation to enter Lent through the lenses of scripture, prayer, music, imagination and art. Retreat includes quiet time for individual prayer as well as opportunity for small group faith sharing. Retreat takes place Saturday, March 7 at St. Mark’s Parish in Vancouver. Coffee and registration at 8:30 a.m., retreat 9 a.m. – 12 p.m., catered lunch 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. Early bird discount (\$20 for students, \$35 for adults) and general admission (\$25 for students, \$45 for adults), parking \$9. Register online at eventbrite.ca



SHARE LENT

During this year's Lent, learn, reflect, pray and act in solidarity with the peoples of the Amazon and the Earth, our common home.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls us to an ecological conversion in our efforts to care for our common home. Quoting his predecessor, he says “the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion (LS, 217).” The desert is the setting of today’s Gospel—the place where Jesus is “led by the Spirit” and tempted by the Devil after 40 days and nights of fasting. The temptation in the desert gives us much to consider as we reflect on our own ecological conversion this first Sunday of Lent. For those of us who have easy access to the abundance of material products produced by the global socioeconomic order of our time, today’s Gospel and its theme of temptation are particularly significant. This is because, in many ways, that system and access to its products are part of what creates the need for ecological conversion in the first place. [More info: www.devvp.org](http://www.devvp.org)

Stewardship Reflection

“It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.” (Matthew 4:10)

Tempted between the riches and power of this world and service to God, Jesus chose service to His Father. If we wish to truly follow Jesus, we, too, must decide to turn away from worldly power and riches and put God at the center of our lives. Lent is our time to prune ourselves of earthly things. Ask God how he is calling you to serve.

Stewardship Office, Archdiocese of St. Louis

CALENDAR

MARCH

Lenten Series



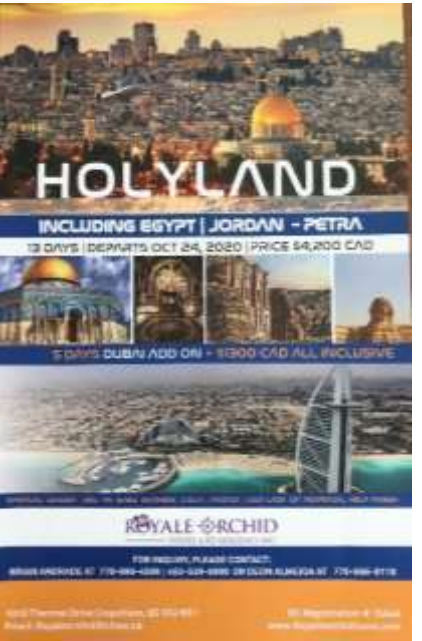
Following Christ takes more than simply believing in him or doing what he asks of us. Jesus wants you to be more than just a believer — He wants you to be his disciple and friend. *Follow Me: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John* is your guide to a personal encounter with Christ. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus seeks after us. He comes to meet us and beckons us to follow him. He calls us to be his disciples, to trust him, to open ourselves to his merciful love, and to love others as he has loved us. *Follow Me* invites you to experience the joy of a renewed friendship with Christ.

7:20 – 8pm Parish Hall
Every Friday of Lent after the Stations of the Cross at 7pm

Lenten Retreat

Redemptorists Associates Retreat: Meditations on the Cross by St Alphonsus Liguori Saturday March 28. Coffee at 9:30am in the Hall. 10am – Noon Talks & Meditation in the Church

Holy Land Pilgrimage



Pope’s Message Lent 2020: Open Your Hearts and Be Reconciled

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
This year the Lord grants us, once again, a favourable time to prepare to celebrate with renewed hearts the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the cornerstone of our personal and communal Christian life. We must continually return to this mystery in mind and heart, for it will continue to grow within us in the measure that we are open to its spiritual power and respond with freedom and generosity.

1. *The paschal mystery as the basis of conversion*
Christian joy flows from listening to, and accepting, the Good News of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This *kerygma* sums up the mystery of a love “so real, so true, so concrete, that it invites us to a relationship of openness and fruitful dialogue” (*Christus Vivit*, 117). Whoever believes this message rejects the lie that our life is ours to do with as we will.

Rather, life is born of the love of God our Father, from his desire to grant us life in abundance (cf. *Jn* 10:10). If we listen instead to the tempting voice of the “father of lies” (*Jn* 8:44), we risk sinking into the abyss of absurdity, and experiencing hell here on earth, as all too many tragic events in the personal and collective human experience sadly bear witness.

In this Lent of 2020, I would like to share with every Christian what I wrote to young people in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: “Keep your eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified, let yourself be saved over and over again. And when you go to confess your sins, believe firmly in his mercy which frees you of your guilt. Contemplate his blood poured out with such great love, and let yourself be cleansed by it. In this way, you can be reborn ever anew” (*No. 123*). Jesus’ Pasch is not a past event; rather, through the power of the Holy Spirit it is ever present, enabling us to see and touch with faith the flesh of Christ in those who suffer.

2. *The urgency of conversion*
It is good to contemplate more deeply the paschal mystery through which God’s mercy has been bestowed upon us. Indeed, the experience of mercy is only possible in a “face to face” relationship with the crucified and risen Lord “who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal* 2:20), in a heartfelt dialogue between friends. That is why prayer is so important in Lent. Even more than a duty, prayer is an expression of our need to respond to God’s love which always precedes and sustains us. Christians pray in the knowledge that, although unworthy, we are still loved. Prayer can take any number of different forms, but what truly matters in God’s eyes is that it penetrates deep within us and chips away at our hardness of heart, in order to convert us ever more fully to God and to his will.

In this favourable season, then, may we allow ourselves to be led like Israel into the desert (cf. *Hos* 2:14), so that we can at last hear our Spouse’s voice and allow it to resound ever more deeply within us. The more fully we are engaged with his word, the more we will experience the

THE SEASON OF LENT

mercy he freely gives us. May we not let this time of grace pass in vain, in the foolish illusion that we can control the times and means of our conversion to him.

3. *God’s passionate will to dialogue with his children*
The fact that the Lord once again offers us a favourable time for our conversion should never be taken for granted. This new opportunity ought to awaken in us a sense of gratitude and stir us from our sloth. Despite the sometimes tragic presence of evil in our lives, and in the life of the Church and the world, this opportunity to change our course expresses God’s unwavering will not to interrupt his dialogue of salvation with us. In the crucified Jesus, who knew no sin, yet for our sake was made to be sin (cf. 2 Cor 5:21), this saving will led the Father to burden his Son with the weight of our sins, thus, in the expression of [Pope Benedict XVI](#), “turning of God against himself” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 12). For God also loves his enemies (cf. Mt 5:43-48).

The dialogue that God wishes to establish with each of us through the paschal mystery of his Son has nothing to do with empty chatter, like that attributed to the ancient inhabitants of Athens, who “spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17:21). Such chatter, determined by an empty and superficial curiosity, characterizes worldliness in every age; in our own day, it can also result in improper use of the media.

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4. *A richness to be shared, not kept for oneself*
Putting the paschal mystery at the centre of our lives means feeling compassion towards the wounds of the crucified Christ present in the many innocent victims of wars, in attacks on life, from that of the unborn to that of the elderly, and various forms of violence. They are likewise present in environmental disasters, the unequal distribution of the earth’s goods, human trafficking in all its forms, and the unbridled thirst for profit, which is a form of idolatry.

Today too, there is a need to appeal to men and women of good will to share, by almsgiving, their goods with those most in need, as a means of personally participating in the building of a better world. Charitable giving makes us more human, whereas hoarding risks making us less human, imprisoned by our own selfishness. We can and must go even further, and consider the structural aspects of our economic life.

For this reason, in the midst of Lent this year, from 26 to 28 March, I have convened a meeting in Assisi with young economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers, with the aim of shaping a more just and inclusive economy. As the Church’s magisterium has often repeated, political life represents an eminent form of charity (cf. Pius XI, *Address to the Italian Federation of Catholic University Students*, 18 December 1927). The same holds true for economic life, which can be approached in the same evangelical spirit, the spirit of the Beatitudes.

I ask Mary Most Holy to pray that our Lenten celebration will open our hearts to hear God’s call to be reconciled to himself, to fix our gaze on the paschal mystery, and to be converted to an open and sincere dialogue with him. In this way, we will become what Christ asks his disciples to be: the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-14).

www.vatican.va